

FISH & WILDLIFE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: August 29, 2013

Agenda Item: Partial Assignment of Sourdough Creek Conservation Easement

Division: Wildlife

Action Needed: Final Approval

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 5 minutes

Background: The Sourdough Creek Conservation Easement (CE) was donated to FWP in 1980 by Robert Seise and covers 230 acres in the foothills of the Gallatin Mountain Range about five miles south of Bozeman. In addition to habitat conservation, the CE provides for a parking area for the popular Mystic Lake trailhead.

During recent years the Gallatin Valley Land Trust, Forest Service and Gallatin County have conducted significant improvements to the trailhead area to restore the Bozeman Creek floodplain and improve recreational access. As part of the parking-area development at the site, ownership of a 1.3-acre parcel covered by the conservation easement was donated by the Sourdough Creek landowner to GVLTL.

FWP now proposes to assign administration of the conservation easement on this 1.3-acre parcel to GVLTL. GVLTL would in turn donate the underlying land, and assign this portion of the easement, to the Forest Service. The purposes of this proposed action are: (1) to remove FWP from oversight of 1.3 acres of the Mystic Lake trailhead parking lot; (2) to facilitate the transfer of an additional five acres at the site from the Gallatin Valley Land Trust to the Forest Service; and (3) to provide for unified ownership and management of the trailhead area.

The remaining 229 acres of the Sourdough Creek Conservation Easement will continue to be administered by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks for the purposes of habitat conservation and open-space preservation. The proposed action will have no effect on the management of this acreage.

Public Involvement Process & Results: On July 18, 2013, FWP released an environmental assessment (EA), describing the proposed action and reviewing its environmental impacts. During the 30-day comment period, FWP received three comments in support of the proposed action and none in opposition. The supportive comments were submitted by the City of Bozeman, the Bridger Ski Foundation and the Bozeman Water Treatment Plant.

Alternatives and Analysis: The no-action alternative, under which FWP would not assign the conservation easement over the 1.3-acre parcel, would continue the status quo. This would not provide for unified Forest Service ownership and management of the trailhead and parking lot area.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale: FWP recommends that the Commission approve the Department's proposed course of action to assign a 1.3-acre portion of the Sourdough Creek Conservation Easement to the Gallatin Valley Land Trust.

Proposed Motion: I move that the Department undertake the Partial Assignment of the Sourdough Creek Conservation Easement, in the manner described as the proposed action in the environmental assessment.